

The Brooklyn Paper

Brooklyn's Real Newspaper

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Smartmom's kids: Write is so wrong

Smartmom's kids hate her Brooklyn Paper column and they want her to stop writing about them. Now, Cease and Desist.

The Oh So Feisty One and Teen Spirit have had it. They don't want their lives plastered across the pages of Brooklyn's real newspaper anymore.



By Louise Crawford

Teen Spirit has hated the column for ages.

"Lies, all lies," he has said from time to time. Now, he doesn't even read it. Smartmom overheard him on the phone recently telling a friend:

"Please do not mention my mother's column to me. Ever."

For a long time, OSFO has enjoyed being mentioned in the column. She loved the one about her Build-a-Bears and the pictures of her and her friends with their Build-a-Bears in the playground at PS 321.

But more recently she was miffed about the Turquoise Turmoil column — and the fact that her picture was on the front page didn't help matters. OSFO was so mad that she wrote a comment to the Brooklyn Paper's online edition: "THIS IS NOT HOW IT WENT AT ALL!!!!!!!"

See **SMARTMOM** on page 8

'PARK' PLAN COLLAPSING

By Mike McLaughlin
The Brooklyn Paper

Hundreds of luxury apartments were slated to be built inside the controversial Brooklyn Bridge Park as a scheme to generate revenue to maintain the open space have been delayed — the latest threat to the financial well being of the long-stalled project.

The apartments, part of a scheme to generate revenue for the upkeep of open space within the development, are the second key funding component

sidelined in as many weeks.

The shelving of the market-rate units were slated to rise near the Atlantic Avenue and Old Fulton Street entrances to the 85-acre site.

The news comes one week after The Brooklyn Paper reported that development plans had postponed a 225-bed, revenue-generating hotel that had been planned for Pier 1.

The cutback in apartment and hotel units — which were included in the 1.3-mile-long development project in order to

See **CONDOS** on page 9



Obama inspires Brooklyn



THE KID

John Fecunda, third grader at PS 11 in Clinton Hill

"Before, when Bush was president, I thought I could never be president. But on Election Day, 2008, history was made. To me, 'Yes we can' means we can make schools a better place to learn. We can turn around our economic crisis. We can change the world. Obama's election journey taught me that a black male can do what a white male can do. And one day, I could become president. I could really become president. Obama inspires me and gives me hope."

The Brooklyn Paper

From a packed assembly at a Clinton Hill elementary school to a full crowd at Borough Hall even to the apartment of a John McCain supporter, Brooklyn lived up to its adopted name — Baracklyn — on Tuesday, cheering as Barack Obama finally received his new title: president of the United States.

The county that gave President Obama more than 80 percent of its votes back in November turned almost entirely to blue, at least during the new Leader of the Free World's inaugural address.

Borough President Markowitz threw open Borough Hall, and the crowd of more than 100 was so jazzed about the new president that people rose to their feet when inauguration MC Sen. Dianne Feinstein asked the audience — she meant the one in DC! — to rise.

There were boos when Vice President Cheney was wheeled out minutes before Obama's swearing-in. But Cheney's eerie appearance was the only somber note for the crowd. There were wet eyes — and a few snifflers — as Obama raised his right hand, and a deafening cheer as Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts finished the ritual of Obama's presidential oath.

Through it all, Markowitz watched from the front row, beaming at Obama, though he had supported Hillary Clinton during the primary season.

Meanwhile, at Front Street Pizza in DUMBO, everyone applauded when Obama finished the mangled out of office with the words, "... so help me God," including eight first-grade boys whose teachers had brought them to the pizzeria for the greasy civics lesson.

The boys — Hispanic and African-Americans, all — fell over each other in excitement.

"I want to be Obama!" cried one 7-year-old.

"I want to be Obama's brother!" said a 6-year-old, mentioning that the new president has a lot on his plate.

See **OBAMAMANIA** on page 11

Is Nathan's a dog goner?

City plan could replace Coney's iconic hot dog stand



Nathan's Famous hot dog stand has been on Surf Avenue since 1916. Its future is in doubt.

By Mike McLaughlin
The Brooklyn Paper

The iconic Nathan's hot dog stand, which has been in Coney Island since 1916, has emerged as the test case in the city's quest to spur a renaissance in the People's Playground by rezoning the limping area.

The Frankfurter Mecca, at

the corner of Stillwell and Surf avenues, lies within a proposed entertainment district of new hotels, restaurants and attractions like arcades and bowling alleys. A prodigious city study released late last week and first reported by The Brooklyn Paper said that if the rezoning goes through as the city hopes, Nathan's

would likely "be replaced ... with a new building, containing hotel, amusement, retail and enhancing uses."

A news story on BrooklynPaper.com on Monday unleashed a chain reaction — Nathan's officials affirmed their commitment to their historic location and government authorities expressed their hope that the hot dog king will continue to reign over Coney Island, despite a rezoning plan that encourages the demolition and redevelopment of the site.

Statements by the city and Nathan's CEO Eric Gattoffo on Tuesday did not rule out that the squat building with screaming signage would be replaced by something new when the rezoning raises the value of the land on which Nathan's sits.

"We remain committed to Coney Island in the long-term and we fully intend to maintain our historic flagship restaurant at 1310 Surf Avenue," Gattoffo said. "We believe the information relating to Nathan's Famous [being redeveloped] is being misinterpreted."

Officials from the city meanwhile hope Nathan's will redevelop its site by adding such elements as a catering hall, sit-down restaurant or even a water-related theme-park ride.

"Nathan's is one of Coney Island's treasured assets and its continued success in its current location is absolutely a part of the administration's vision," said Gattoffo.

See **NATHANS** on page 9



Park Slope author Joshua Henkin (he's the man) will read and discuss his work with any book group that asks.

Ace of clubs!

Slope author will visit your book group

By Zeke Faux
for The Brooklyn Paper

Call him the anti-Salinger. Call him a shameless self-promoter. Hey, just call him — he'll show up at your book club!

Two cross-country tours in the past year and a half weren't enough for Park Slope writer Joshua Henkin — he's also intimidated himself into more than 80 book groups to discuss his second novel, "Marrimono."

And he's not just looking to sell books or get a free meal (though, let's face it, a meal would be nice) — Henkin will travel up to two hours to talk to a book group just because he thinks it's what writers should do.

"Writers should want readers," said Henkin, who also speaks to groups via Web cams (it's like he's really there — and you don't have to feed him).

In the not-so-distant past, a deal with a

reputable publisher (Random House) and glowing reviews from the Times ("a likeable, lifelike book") and The Brooklyn Paper ("Wow, really good") would have been enough to keep a novelist supplied with cigarettes and espresso.

But "the old models are changing," explained Henkin. "Prestige doesn't sell books anymore, and if you want to keep publishing these days, you need good sales."

Fortunately, Henkin's unaffected tale of a would-be writer's winding path to domestic harmony has resonated with reading groups, which are overwhelmingly comprised of middle-aged females.

And it helps that, unlike some writers (and, yes, we're talking about Slope neighbor Jonathan Safran Foer), Henkin isn't afraid to demystify his work, even though

See **HENKIN** on page 11

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Marty to CB2: Drink liberally

By Zeke Faux
The Brooklyn Paper

Does Community Board 2 have an alcohol problem? It certainly seems that way to Brooklyn's pre-eminent foodie, Borough President Markowitz.

With the Brooklyn Heights, DUMBO, Fort Greene and Boerum Hill board's health, environment and social services committee's set to disapprove yet another liquor license on Jan. 7 — a vote that came one month after another high-profile booze license request by politically connected restaurateur Buzzy O'Keefe was denied by the same panel — CB2 Chairman John Dew personally delivered a message from Markowitz that the panel should take a more liberal approach to drinking.

"The borough president asked us to be mindful of that and to take into consideration that it's very common to also serve alcohol at a restaurant," Dew said.

A local community board's approval of a liquor license is not essential, as the board's vote becomes only a recommendation to the all-powerful State Liquor Authority.

That said, CB2, unlike other area boards, calls in each new license seeker for a grilling, a process that often involves lawyers and lobbyists.

The board has turned down four of its last 20 new applicants, statistics show. Meanwhile, other community boards in boom-living neighborhoods are more supportive.

Community Board 6, which represents Park Slope, Carroll Gardens, Cobble Hill and Red Hook, and Community Board 10, which covers Bay Ridge, generally just offer advice to would-be restaurateurs. Applicants in Williamsburg's Community Board 1 often bring representation, but none of those boards has rejected a new applicant who appeared in person in the past two months.

The Liquor Authority has over-ruled CB2 in two recent cases, but that doesn't make the process any less onerous for entrepreneurs.

"We're taking a risk and spending money," said Dena Baledemic, whose proposed trattoria — already months into construction — faces CB2 opposition. "What if a steady customer wants a Sanbua or a limoncello?"

CB2 chairman Dew denied that the board has neo-Prohibitionist or anti-business leanings.

"They are not opposed to bars in general, but there is always a concern that bars will cause more problems for the surrounding residents," Dew told The Brooklyn Paper.



Community Board 2 turned down Dena Baledemic's request for a liquor license.

Circuit City is 86'd in Ridge

By Ben Muessig
The Brooklyn Paper

Bay Ridge's booming 86th Street is about to be unplugged.

In what will be the biggest retail closure to hit Bay Ridge since the Key Food supermarket shut its doors in May, the electronics superstore Circuit City — which opened its two-story location at the corner of 86th Street and Fifth Avenue only three years ago — is going out of business.

Thanks to the tanking economy, all 567 Circuit City stores nationwide, including another Brooklyn location in the Bruce Ratner-owned Atlantic Center Mall, will close by March, leaving approximately 34,000 unemployed — 40 to 50 of them in Bay Ridge.

"Due to challenges to our business and the continued bleak economic environment, Circuit City is going out of business and the company's assets will be liquidated to pay off creditors," read a message on the electronics purveyor's Web site. "The process was extremely difficult and we were left with no other choice but to liquidate."

The sell-off has already started at the 86th Street location, but just how long it will stay open is anyone's guess.

"We'll be open until the inventory sells out," one employee told The Brooklyn Paper. "How am I supposed to know when that will be?"

When Circuit City opened on the bustling commercial stretch in 2006, Ridgeites cheered its arrival, said Community Board 10 District Manager Josephine Beckmann. Now they're mourning its departure.

"That site where Circuit City is currently housed was vacant for a very long time before Circuit City came in," Beckmann said. "It was really to the great joy of the community that they invested here in 86th Street, and they will be very missed."

The pending closure of Circuit City and the recent shuttering of KB Toys, 86th Street — which commands the highest rents per square foot in the borough — will hurt John Logue, president of the 86th Street Business Improvement District, added.

"What's scary now is just how light the foot traffic has gotten on 86th Street since the first of the year," Logue said. "It certainly doesn't bode well."

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BROOKLYN HEIGHTS

Death claims two

Owner dies and pet shop goes with her

By Christina Long
for The Brooklyn Paper

It looks like the Tailored Pet is going to die with Serena Bellino.

After Bellino's death on Dec. 5, two employees at her popular Pineapple Walk pet store swore to keep the store going.

"We have a connection with our customers and an obligation to them," said Andrea Demetropoulos, who worked at the store for five of its 35 years, but knew Bellino since 1981. "We want to keep the store open and do the same things Serena did. We want to keep her legacy going."

But Bellino did not leave a will, so before anyone could take over the store, an executor will have to be appointed. But by the time that happens, the Whitman Owners Corporation, which owns the retail storefront on Pineapple Walk, near Henry Street, will have already cleaned out the pet shop and rented it to someone else, said David Grillo, the Whitman Owners Corporation manager.

Serena, who would have been 60 on Feb. 2, "was totally devoted to animals," brother Tom, said. "That store was her life."

Bellino's death was a blow not only to area pets, but to her customers.

"Serena was a wonderful person. I loved her, everyone loved her," said Del Avery, who had been going to the pet store since 1989 to buy treats for her dogs Holly and Cypsey. "I remember when I bought my second dog, just after my first dog died, Serena gave me St. Francis of Assisi medallions to put on her collar. Wasn't that sweet? That's just the kind of person she was."

If Demetropoulos and her co-worker William Johnson, who worked at the Tailored Pet for 16 years, can't just re-open the shuttered store, they will try to re-open it with a different name. They want to call it the Primo and Rose Pet Store, after the resident cats, who were born there.

"It's fitting," said Demetropoulos. "The Tailored Pet was the only home Primo and Rose knew, and we want to make sure they keep their home."

Demetropoulos isn't sure that the property owners are convinced that a new pet store will do well, so she's urging former customers and residents to e-mail her at demetropoulos@gmail.com. She hopes that a huge show of support will show that there's a market to continue Bellino's life work.



This Pineapple Walk pet supply store has been closed since its owner's death in December.

BAY RIDGE

'Green' school greenlighted

By Ben Muessig
The Brooklyn Paper

The plan to build a school on the site of Bay Ridge's now demolished "Green Church" earned an A+ from an influential neighborhood group last week.

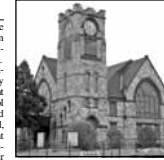
Community Board 10 zoning and education committees need unanimously approved the city's plan to build a 680-seat kindergarten through fifth grade school at the former site of the Bay Ridge United Methodist Church — an emerald-hued, landmark-worthy house of worship that was torn down in October by the congregation to make room for a smaller, easier to maintain church funded by the sale of the land at the corner of Fourth and Ovington avenues.

When the \$9.75-million deal closes between the congregation and developer Abe Betesh, the city is aiming to acquire the land from the builder — who initially planned to construct 72 condominiums on the site, but in December posted a billboard advertising the property as a potential location for a school.

The city sees the land — which was at the center of a lengthy struggle between the congregation and neighborhood preservationists who sought to "save" the green-toned building — as much-needed space in the borough's most overcrowded school district.

"This is a fairly large site in an area where we need seats desperately," said Tami Rachelson of the School Construction Authority, whose agency is currently eyeballing a site on Fourth Avenue between 88th and 90th streets for another school, and is considering building an annex for PS 69 on 62nd Street between Fort Hamilton Parkway and Ninth Avenue.

The board's "no" vote came from Bob Casan, who argued that instead of building a new school, the city should lease space from the Catholic school Our Lady of Angles, which is scheduled to close next year. Department of Education officials countered that rehabilitating parochial schools is typically costly as they do often do not meet the city's codes.



The site of the now-demolished Green Church might become an elementary school.

PARK SLOPE

Hospital faces critics

'Angry' parents meet with NY Methodist

for The Brooklyn Paper

New York Methodist Hospital has pacified the famously irascible Park Slope Parents.

In response to a litany of complaints about emergency care posted on the popular Web site last month, the Seventh Avenue medical center invited angry stroller-pushers to air their grievances in a public meeting on Wednesday night — and even the harshest critics walked away satisfied.

Hospital administrators stood by their ER docs, but told the seven parents who showed up that they were working to train waiting-room staff to resolve conflicts better.

The hospital said it is also hiring a new nurse to handle minor injuries.

"We want to get the same kind of caring, sympathetic vision from [waiting-room staff] as we already get from our doctors," said Robert Van Amerongen, Methodist's head of the pediatric ER.

Van Amerongen recommends that parents at least attempt to contact their pediatrician before bringing tykes to the hospital, to avoid the long ER waits which are sometimes unavoidable and always unpredictable.

"There's no way to know for sure when you'll be seen," said ER director Josef Schenker, who explained that the hospital tries to attend to patients in order, but that urgent cases will be treated first.

The doc's candid approach went over well with the parents at the meeting.

Ilse Knecht, a mother assigned to cover the meeting for the Web site, said that "it sounds like they know the problems, and the system they're putting in could address the issues."

— Zeke Faux

FORT GREENE

BAM! Academy seeks big bucks

By Ben Muessig
The Brooklyn Paper

One year into an ambitious, five-year, \$300-million fundraising mission, the Brooklyn Academy of Music has already netted half of the coveted cash. But can the arts center raise the rest at a time when other arts institutions are seeing sharp declines in donations?

BAM officials say yes.

The cash-generating effort started quietly about 12 months ago and netted the cultural hub about \$160 million for its "Next Wave" development plan, which calls for a black box theater on Ashland Place, plus a new movie theater, art gallery and residential building in a yet-to-be-determined location in the BAM Cultural District — the borough's so-called Lincoln Center.

The expensive — and expensive — plans aren't just architectural.

The sought-after cash will also go towards reinvigorating programming with the continuation of "Bridge Project" performances like the current production of Chekhov's "The Cherry Orchard," and the launch of an Opera Biennial and a 10-day citywide Muslim arts and cultural festival featuring performances, films, exhibitions and lectures.

The far-reaching "Next Wave" program also includes the goal of doubling BAM's \$67-million endowment by 2014.

That's a heck of a goal.

"We are usually pretty successful with our fundraising," Alan Fishman, chairman of the BAM Board of Trustees, said at a playfully press event to kick off the second phase of the money push.

"We understand what people are going through, but we are confident."

"We're not foolish, we're not arrogant — we just want to make this work," he added.

BAM's decision to go public with its massive fundraising requests at a time when other arts institutions are tightening their belts or shuttering their facilities is a bold move, and fundraising experts say the breadth of the cash-generating effort might make it easier for BAM to achieve its goals while other cultural organizations face scathing budget cuts.

"It can be achieved, but it's going to be difficult," said Kate Levin, commissioner of the Department of Cultural Affairs. "BAM has done a great job getting what they've gotten so far. They have a wide range of things for people to invest in. It's incredibly helpful to have that large of a palette."



The Academy's restored cornice after a 2004 renovation.

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84TH PRECINCT

Brooklyn Heights-DUMBO
Boerum Hill-Downtown

Guitar anti-hero
Jan. 10 was the day the music died in a Flatbush Avenue music shop — because a villain stole some recording equipment.

Sometimes in the morning, a minstrel brazenly walked out the front door, lugging two expensive music recording devices with him from the shop in the Bruce Ratner-owned mall between Atlantic Avenue and Hanson Place.

Key to problem

Leaving the keys in the ignition of a sporty utility vehicle made it easy for a thief to drive off with the car parked on Flushing Avenue on Jan. 10. — **Mike McLaughlin**

94TH PRECINCT

Greenpoint-Williamsburg

Gun smack

Two men jumped and robbed another man as he entered the lobby of his Sutton Street apartment building on Jan. 13.

The 38-year-old victim told cops that he walked through the front door to the building, between Driggs and Nassau avenues, at around 5:30 pm and was attacked by two thugs.

They took cash and a watch before biting him in the forehead with a handgun and running away.

Buck bum

A man tripped and robbed a good Samaritan at gunpoint as he walked down Woodpoint Road on Jan. 17.

The victim, 41, said he was walking home at around 11 pm when a man approached him at the corner of Jackson Street and asked to borrow a dollar. When the victim pulled out his wallet, the thief pulled out a gun, pointed it at the victim and said, "Give it up, man."

The thief then grabbed the wallet, which contained various debit and credit cards, and fled.

Engert insult

Someone burgled an Engert Avenue home on Jan. 12.

The victim, 32, told police he left the house, between Graham Avenue and Guinness Boulevard, at around 2 pm. When he returned just after 9 pm, he noticed his apartment door was wide open and various electronics were missing from inside. — **Emily Levin**

Thief snacks on diner's bag

watch and two gift cards from the building between Ashland Place and St. Felix Street.

Jan. 10 was the day the music died in a Flatbush Avenue music shop — because a villain stole some recording equipment.

Sometimes in the morning, a minstrel brazenly walked out the front door, lugging two expensive music recording devices with him from the shop in the Bruce Ratner-owned mall between Atlantic Avenue and Hanson Place.

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POLICE BLOTTER

Find more online every Wednesday at
BrooklynPaper.com/blotter

90TH PRECINCT

Williamsburg-Bushwick

All wet

Someone broke into a Meserole Street apartment while the victim was in the shower — on Jan. 13.

The 29-year-old victim told cops he was inside the apartment, between Bushwick Place and Waterbury Street, at around 7 am. He stepped into the steaming stall and turned on music.

When he stepped out of the shower a half-hour later, he found his front door wide open and realized his laptop had been taken out of his room.

Swilpstop

Someone grabbed a woman's laptop out of her South First Street apartment on Jan. 13.

The victim, 21, told police that she was in her apartment, between Berry Street and Bedford Avenue, at around 2:45 pm, when she left her computer on the table as she went to help her roommate carry luggage downstairs.

When she returned, she realized she had left the door open, and noticed her laptop was gone from inside.

Teen mug

Two men cornered and robbed a teenage boy as he walked home on Broadway on Jan. 13.

The 14-year-old victim was at the corner of Driggs Avenue at around 4:30 pm when the two thugs walked up to him and punched him, forcing him to the ground. While one of the men started kicking the victim, the other reached down and grabbed his cellphone.

Bushwick stab

A dispute at a Bushwick Avenue bar turned violent when one man stabbed another man on Jan. 15.

The 25-year-old victim told cops he got into an argument with a stranger at the bar earlier in the night. He left at around 12:45 am and was standing at the corner of Bushwick Avenue when the suspect walked up to him and slashed his face and arm with a knife.

Evans Gardner

68TH PRECINCT

Bay Ridge

Bus fuss

A mean mugger hijacked a 71-year-old woman's purse as she rode the B10 bus through Bay Ridge on Jan. 13.

The thief boarded the bus at the corner of Fifth Avenue and 86th Street at around 8:55 am and snatched the handbag.

The victim shouted that her purse — which contained a credit card, a family photo, keys, food stamps, eyeglasses, IDs, and \$55 — was being heisted, but the crook pushed his way through the rear doors and escaped.

Mean streets

A hoodlum knocked a cyclist from his bike and mugged the grounded man near the corner of Baltic and Hoyt streets on Jan. 13.

The victim, 25, said he was toppled at 10:45 pm and that the brigand slapped him in the face after he fell from the penny-farthing. The mugger allegedly took \$70 and a cell phone.

Unloading zone

A plunderer stole the riches contained in a parked car on Hoyt Street on Jan. 10.

The driver, a 46-year-old man, said he parked his vehicle at 6 am between Wyckoff and Warren streets and left it there until 2 pm. By that hour, a window had been smashed and his radio, a battery for the transceiver, antenna, and four cameras were nicked from the auto.

78TH PRECINCT

Park Slope

Gonetops

The neighborhood is in the midst of a spate of laptops thefts. Here's a rundown:

A burglar broke into a St. John's Place apartment on Jan. 12 and took two Dell laptops, each worth \$1,200. A neighbor told cops that he saw someone enter the apartment, which is between Seventh and Eighth avenues, at 8:15 am.

Someone stole \$2,000 worth of electronics from an apartment on President Street on Jan. 12. The owner told cops that she left her apartment, which is between Fourth and Fifth avenues, at 8:30 am. When she returned around midnight, she noticed that her laptop and two external hard drives were gone.

Someone forced the front door of an apartment of Sackton Street and stole a \$1,500 Apple on Jan. 15. The owner told cops that she left her apartment, which is between Fourth and Fifth avenues, at 8 am, and returned at 7 pm to find her computer missing.

Evans Gardner

Sad New Year

Thieves heisted a Bay Ridge woman's purse on a Brooklyn-bound train on Jan. 17 — stealing all of the valuables that she had just removed from her safe-deposit box in preparation for Chinese New Year.

The crooks grabbed the 48-year-old victim's bag after she fell asleep between 1 pm and 1:50 pm, as the train was between Canal Street in Manhattan and 62nd Street and Eighth Avenue in Bay Ridge — making off with credit cards, IDs, a Rolex watch, a jade necklace, a Burberry bag and a Louis Vuitton wallet. — **Ben Muesig**

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JANUARY RECOMMENDATIONS

These are Darrin's Best Buys for January!

Darrin's January Discovery Wines!

Darren's "Spirit of the Month!"

Triple Eight Vodka
Every year, my grandmother would flavor a bottle, adding a dried tangerine peel one year, a small handful of cherry pits the next. After a week or two, the bottle would go into the freezer, to be enjoyed in small sips. Finding good vodka isn't easy. That's why I'm so enthusiastic about Triple Eight! The cranberry is light & dry, while the blueberry is a knock-out. This is one you must try!

Organic Wine of the Month

Cantina Ciolli 'Silene'
A delicious, hand-made red wine from Lazio, this small family owned vineyard & winery lies 40 km south of Rome. This is a wine of complexity, intense and deeply flavored yet fresh & lively on the palate. The wine is full-flavored and smooth as silk, this wine has finesse balance & depth.

What I'm Drinking Now

Schneider, Cabernet Franc/Petit Verdot, 2005
Our good friend (and Park Slope neighbor) Bruce Schneider has hit one right out of the ballpark this time! For years, I've been saying that the North Fork of Long Island, with its Bordeaux-like temperate climate, produces the finest Cabernet Franc wines made in America. This is, simply, a beautiful wine, fit for a gracious holiday table.

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The Brooklyn Paper's essential guide to the Borough of Kings

January 24, 2008

Rock of aged

Bay Ridge bands never die — and they don't fade away

By Ben Muessli

The Brooklyn Paper

Neil Young said that it's better to burn out than it is to rust. Obviously, he's never rocked in Bay Ridge.

The Brooklyn music world might be dominated by young hipsters in Williamsburg, but an older crowd of Bay Ridge cover artists are proving that age — like a venue's listed maximum capacity — is nothing but a number.

Vocalist and guitarist Frankie Marra has seen bands and venues come and go during his 30 years on the bar circuit. And he's seen music go from rock to disco to punk to New Wave and back again.

But the only difference between the 30-something rocker of the 1980s and today's 53-year-old frontman of Frankie Marra and his band are the expectations.

"When we were younger, we thought we would be the next signed artists on Columbia, but at our age, we do it just because we still get a kick out of it," said Marra, whose rock and roll dream got him no further than a gig working as a body guard for Bruce Springsteen.

For Marra — and the other golden oldies who know they'll never put out a golden record — only the thrill of performing keeps them proving it all night.

"We're proud that people aren't looking at us and thinking, 'These guys should have just stayed home,'" said Mike Riddle, a 55-year-old neighborhood legend — known for his 1970s band, Rhodes, and his 1980s New Wave act, City Kids. He's still rocking hard, now with his new band, Prodigal Child.

The rush of being on stage keeps Marra and his gang banging out classics from the British invasion, standards like "Hotel California," and, when the crowd seems younger, (slightly more) contemporary tracks like Radiohead's 1992 smash "Creep."

Then again, the crowd is rarely younger. In fact, the Narrows-side neighborhood is what is known as a "Naturally Occurring Retirement Community" — one where folks over 60 years old occupy more than 40 percent of homes.

Yet those gray residents are the key to old rockers' revival.

"My audience is 40 to 60-year-olds, predominantly — and they want to hear the songs from their youth," said Marra, who is at his best belting out hits by Van Morrison and John " Cougar " Mellencamp.



Prisoners of rock

• **THEN:** Flashback (1975)

Back in the day, Tony Ieva banged the skins with Jack Whitman and Jimmy Maloney. Now, he's in a cover band with Gerry Gioia and Bob McDermod playing only the classics of classic rock.

• **NOW:** Our Back Pages



• **THEN:** City Kids (1980s)

The family that rocks together stays together. Mike Riddle (right in both pictures) is still in a band with his wife, Jane T. (next to him in both shots). Their covers are mostly blues-rock and feature guitarist Tony Monier.

• **NOW:** Prodigal Child



• **THEN:** Frankie Marra and his Band (1990s)

No matter who he's playing with, guitarist Marra serves up covers, with a set list that runs the full gamut from Dylan to Springsteen, though sometimes he throws in a "new" song like Radiohead's "Creep" from 1992.

• **NOW:** Frankie Marra and his Band



"People in Bay Ridge want covers, that's why we gravitate here."

Venue owners like Bobby Daquara — whose Greenhouse Café on Third Avenue is the de facto center of the Gray Rock scene — say they book old rockers because of the kinds of crowds they draw.

"A lot of bars in Bay Ridge don't want to deal with kids. You want to get a mature crowd — otherwise you risk losing your liquor license," he said.

As the bands have grown older, the challenges of being in a band have changed, but they haven't gone away. While younger crooners must overcome a wild life on the road typified by drug use, STDs, and the pleasant distraction of groupies, older

rockers face a unique set of problems — like Riddle's arthritis.

"Performing is way more taxing," said Riddle, who has only about 80 percent mobility in his left hand, but still offers up a set list filled with guitar gods like Eric Clapton and Steve Ray Vaughan. "When we played our first gig with two long sets, we were kind of shocked — it felt like we were up there for an eternity."

Most of Bay Ridge's older rockers say they are happy to have settled down with wives, children, and careers — but that doesn't mean they don't miss the days of being wild.

"Having jobs and careers and families makes it harder. Life gets in the way now," said Tony Ieva, 51, a bus driver and drummer who covers Bob Dylan, the Beatles and the Byrds in his band Our Back Pages.

Ieva cut his teeth as a teenager in the legendary 1970s band Flashback. "Back then, with no kids, and no job, you could be out there playing rock and roll until 3 a.m. — it's not like that anymore," Ieva said.

Prodigal Child at Kettle Black (8622 Third Ave., between 86th and 87th streets, (718) 680-7822), Jan. 24, 5 p.m.; Frankie Marra and his Band at Greenhouse Café (7717 Third Ave., between 77th and 78th streets, (718) 833-8200), Jan. 24, 10 p.m.; Our Back Pages at Bally's (9510 Third Ave., between 95th and 96th streets, (718) 833-2801), Jan. 30, 10 p.m.

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Unexpected country

Add 'folk singer' to Andy Friedman's odd resume

By Gersh Kuntzman

The Brooklyn Paper

One of the coolest acts to come out of Brooklyn's music scene is a country-crooning Jewish cartoonist from the New Yorker magazine who has two creaky chords and a voice

that sounds like it was run over by the kind of beat-up Dodge that rumbles through his songs.

Then again, he may just be the truest singer-songwriter in the borough.

Friedman lives in Prospect Heights, near Freddy's Bar, the Prohibition-era tavern that is

slated to be torn down for Bruce Ratner's basketball arena. The bar appears in a mournful song on Friedman's forthcoming CD, "Weary Things," which will be unveiled at Friedman's Jan. 29 show at Southpaw. This week, he traded blues-mots with GO

Brooklyn.

GO: Your album is refreshing because it's genuine country, not some kind of hipster, Po-Mo, satirical, satirical country. So here's my question: Who are you to be doing genuine country?

Andy Friedman: The kind of music I'm playing only sounds like country crooner — and part-time country crooner — Andy Friedman.

See **ANDY** on page 8



New Yorker cartoonist — and part-time country crooner — Andy Friedman.

ART

Art's sake

The economy may stink, but that isn't stopping the owners of two new art galleries.

"It's the worst time ever to open, but sometimes a crisis gives people the opportunity to do what they've always wanted to do," said Muriel Guépin, whose Shop Art gallery in Boerum Hill will host its first show on Feb. 7.



Guépin's concept is to sell affordable art, so her gallery will be filled with less-costly work by new artists. Prices will cap around \$1,500.

Meanwhile in Greenwood Heights, another gallery, Under Minerva (pictured), has opened on Fifth Avenue near 19th Street with a different formula: patrons can also take classes in art, yoga, meditation and creative writing in addition to buying the stuff on the walls.

"A little consideration [toward the economy] has been taken, which is why we have supplemental things going on," said Under Minerva's art director, Tony Orrico.

Shop Art Gallery (51 Bergen St., between Smith Street and Boerum Place in Boerum Hill, (718) 858-4355), Wednesday-Saturday, 11 am-7 pm; Sunday noon-5 pm; Under Minerva (656 Fifth Ave., near 19th Street in Greenwood Heights), Tuesday-Friday, noon-6 pm; Saturday 2-6 pm. Visit www.underminerva.com for info.

— Sarah Portlock

DINING

Vinegar chic

It's on an unlikely block — yet Vinegar Hill House has become a destination restaurant almost overnight.

Hudson Avenue is far to the east of far-hipper DUMBO, but co-owners Sam Buffa and chef Jean Adamson (pictured) think the retail space in front of their carriage house between Water and Front streets is perfect.

The space is comfy and warm, with a copper bar, hand-crafted tables and booths and a patio in the back. There are quiet nooks scattered about, too.

The restaurant seats only 41 people, so it's frequently packed, even though Buffa and Adamson don't have their liquor license yet.

Adamson's menu changes daily, but always incorporates local, seasonal ingredients cooked in a giant wood-burning oven that the couple secured from California. House specialties include braised lamb shoulder with smoky chickpeas and roasted fennel; cast-iron chicken, which comes with caramelized shallots in a sherry pan sauce.

Vinegar Hill House (72 Hudson Ave., between Front and Water streets in Vinegar Hill, (718) 522-1018). Closed Mondays. For info, visit www.vinegarhillhouse.com.

— Sarah Portlock

DINING

Whatta red!

It might just be the best house wine in the borough.

Perhaps that should be expected, given that said vintage will start being poured on Thursday at the new Brook-vin, an enophile paradise on Seventh Avenue in Park Slope that's owned by Aaron and Gillian Huns, who also own Big Nose, Full Body across the street.

This house wine — hint: it's the one in the unmarked bottles — is an exclusive blend by Sonoma County vintner Jake Hawkes. It's rich on the palate and not too fruity or sweet — yet as good as it is, it's just one reason to stop in.

Manager Brian Macchelli (pictured) makes his own house-infused bourbon and fruit-soaked vodkas (don't get him started on his homemade syrups, either). And chef Dave Townsend (formerly of Savoy in Manhattan) will be offering small plates, including house-cured meats and salamis, local cheeses and salads that top out at \$10.

"A couple can come in, split a half-bottle and order two plates, yet get out for less than \$40," Mitchell said.

Brook-vin (381 Seventh Ave., between 11th and 12th streets in Park Slope, (718) 768-9463) opens on Thursday, Jan. 22.

— Gersh Kuntzman

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WHERE TO GO

EDITORS' PICKS

SATURDAY January 24	SUNDAY January 25	TUESDAY January 27	THURSDAY January 29	FRIDAY January 30
Spike axe French-born acoustic axe virtuoso Stephane Wrembel, whose music was recently featured in Woody Allen's "Vicky Cristina Barcelona," has become a fixture in Brooklyn, and he and his lightning-quick fingers are back in town. His African, Middle Eastern, and Indian-inspired music are a great way to cap an evening out. 7 pm, Spike Hill (194 Bedford Ave. at North Seventh Street in Williamsburg) (718) 218-9737, Free.	Bot Ox Celebrate the Chinese New Year — The Year of the Ox — with opera singers, martial artists and acrobats at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden's annual energetic celebration. Guided tours of the garden's plant collection will also be available as a great way to wind down after the festivities. 10 am, The Brooklyn Botanic Garden (1000 Washington Ave. at Eastern Parkway in Prospect Heights) (718) 623-7200, \$8. \$4 for seniors and students.	Kosher gescheft Hear a rabbi read from his book about, of all things, how to run a business. His first piece of advice: Don't kvetch! Rabbi Aaron Raskin, the spiritual leader of Congregation B'nai Avraham, who co-wrote "The Rabbi and the CEO" with Thomas Zwielfel (he's the CEO), will be reading selected passages. 7 pm, Barnes & Noble (106 Court St. between Schermerhorn and State streets in Brooklyn Heights) (718) 246-4966, Free.	Free booze Lovers of free alcohol only: if you've been spending hours in liquor stores trying to figure out the difference between Champagne, Prosecco and sparkling wine, here's your chance to go from average drape to aficionado, and sample from a large, all-you-can-taste selection of wines and spirits — for free. 5:30 pm, Bar 12-21 at Morton's The Steakhouse (139 Adams St. between Johnson and Fulton streets in Downtown) (718) 396-2700, Free.	Cheap skates Prospect Park's Wollman Rink is half-priced all day (and open late). Whether you're a faltering novice or an Olympic wannabe, this is your chance to put on the skates, but leave the big bills at home. And here's a piece of advice: have some hot cocoa after. You know you want it. 8:30 am-10 pm, Wollman Rink in Prospect Park, enter park at Ocean Avenue and Lincoln Road in Prospect Lefferts Gardens (718) 287-6471, \$2.50 adults, \$1.50 seniors.

WINTER DAYS IN BROOKLYN

Compiled by Susan Rosenthal Jay

SAT. JAN. 24

PERFORMANCE
THEATER, "THE CHERRY ORCHARD": Tom Stoppard's version of Chekhov's classic. \$30-\$90, 7:30 pm, BAM Harvey Theater (651 Fulton St. at Rockwell Place in Fort Greene) (718) 636-4700, www.bam.org.
PLAY READING, "THE CRUCIBLE": Brave New World Repertory Theater presents Arthur Miller's classic. Admission price includes dinner! \$18-\$730, 3 pm, Old Stone House (19th Avenue between Third and Fourth streets in Park Slope) (718) 768-3195, www.bravenewworldrep.org.
THEATER, "THE PROTESTANTS": A Southern gothic epic. \$10-\$18, 8 pm, Rock Theater (575 Metropolitan Ave. near Lorimer Street in Williamsburg) (718) 362-3101, www.bricktheater.com.
OTHER
ANTIQUES MARKET: Brooklyn Flea opens its indoor winter antique and vintage store. FREE, 11 am-6 pm, Brooklyn Flea (521 Fulton St. at Rockwell Place in Fort Greene) (718) 636-4700, www.brooklynflea.com.
PET ADOPTION FAIR: Come find a new best friend! Noon-6 pm, NYC Pet (241 Bedford Ave. between North Fourth and North Third streets in Williamsburg) (718) 252-3183, www.nycpet.com.
SOMETHING'S COOKING: Nancy Carls, author of "America's Kitchen," talks. FREE, 1 pm, The Brooklyn Kitchen (484 Lorimer St. at Skiffen Avenue in Williamsburg) (718) 389-2982.
GET OVER HIM: Kerith Fields, author of "He's Gone, You're Back: The Right Way to Get Over Mr. Wrong," talks to Essence magazine writer Kati Gray. FREE, 2 pm, Brown Baptist Memorial Church (184 Washington Ave. at Gates Avenue in Fort Greene) (718) 765-7910.
AUCTION: Scandinavian East Coast Museum hosts its annual winter. Price of admission includes food. \$20, 2 pm-5 pm, Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 440 Livingston Ave. between Third and Fifth avenues in Bay Ridge (718) 748-5950.

SUN. JAN. 25

PERFORMANCE
PLAY READING, "THE CRUCIBLE": Brave New World Repertory Theater presents Arthur Miller's classic. Admission price includes dinner! \$18-\$730, 3 pm, Old Stone House (19th Avenue between Third and Fourth streets in Park Slope) (718) 768-3195, www.bravenewworldrep.org.
CONCERT, CHAMBER MUSIC: Trio Capella performs. \$20, 3:30 pm, Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church (185 South Oxford St. at Lafayette Avenue in Fort Greene) (718) 625-7515.
THEATER, "THE CHERRY ORCHARD": 3 pm, See Saturday, Jan. 24.
CLASSICAL MUSIC: American String Quartet performs. \$40 (\$15 students), 3 pm, Bergamusic (Fulton Ferry Landing, Old Fulton Street at the East River) (718) 624-0083, www.bergamusic.com.
CONCERT: French vocal music. \$20, 8 pm, 3 pm, Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church (185 South Oxford St. at Lafayette Avenue in Fort Greene) (718) 625-7515.
RUSSIAN PLAY, "I SPEAK WITH YOU FROM LENINGRAD": Poetry, diaries, documentary and the music of Shostakovich, in Russian. \$15-\$50, 5 pm, Shorefront V (1300 Connetquot Ave. at Brighton Court in Brighton Beach) (718) 646-1444.
OTHER
LUNAR NEW YEAR: Year of the Ox features a lineup of Qi Shui Feng Peking Opera dancers, martial artists and acrobats. Also, guided tours of the plant collection. \$5, \$4 seniors and students, 10 am-4:30 pm, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, 1000 Washington Ave. at Eastern Parkway in Crown Heights (718) 623-7220, www.bbg.org.
CIVIL RIGHTS READING: FREE, 11 am, Brooklyn Ethnic Culture Society (53 Prospect Park West at First Street in Park Slope) (718) 768-2973.
DO WE ALL SHARE THE SAME DREAM? Martin Luther King Jr. commemorative with journalists at Domino Center. FREE, 11 am, Flatbush and Shearar Torah Jewish Center (327 East Fifth St. at Church Avenue) (718) 571-5200.
READING, TANTALUM MUSIC: A collection of publications, presents prose possibilities. FREE, 4 pm, Proseur (6543 Union St. at Nevins Street) (718) 243-1572.
ISRAELI FILM FEST, "CHILDREN OF THE SUN": Israeli film festival, presents documentary features and shorts from Israel's great experience in so-called and communal child rearing from the 1950s to the present. Israel's 2008 Academy Award for best documentary, \$10, 7 pm, Kane Street Synagogue (236 Kane St. between Court and Clinton streets in Cobble Hill) (718) 765-7635.
THEATER, "THE CHERRY ORCHARD": 3 pm, See Saturday, Jan. 24.
ANTIQUE MARKET: See Saturday, Jan. 24.

CIVIC CALENDAR

MONDAY, JAN. 26
Community Board 2, Eastern Avenue in Bay Ridge; 7:15 pm, Call (718) 748-6827 for info.
Community Board 1, Land Use and Waterfront Committee. Lady of the Snow Society (410 Graham Ave. in Bay Ridge); 7:15 pm, Call (718) 748-6827 for info.
TUESDAY, JAN. 27
Department of Transportation workshop. On the agenda: redesign of Third Street, St. Francis College (180 Remsen St. between Court and Clinton streets in Brooklyn Heights); 6 pm, Call (718) 222-7239 for info.
78th Precinct Community Council. Monthly meeting, 78th Precinct stationhouse (65 Fifth Avenue, at Bergen Street in Prospect Heights); 7:30 pm, Call (718) 636-6465.
WEDNESDAY, JAN. 28
Community Board 2, Youth, Education and Cultural Affairs Committee. Long Island University (Flatbush Avenue Extension at DeKalb Avenue in Fort Greene); 6 pm, Call (718) 596-5410 for info.
THURSDAY, JAN. 29
To list an event in the Civic Calendar, e-mail Newsroom@BrooklynPaper.com.

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The sour 'Cherry'

No need to Chekhov BAM's slow-mo version

By Gersh Kuntzman
The Brooklyn Paper

There are two great moments in the new production of Chekhov's "The Cherry Orchard," running through March 8 at the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

Unfortunately, they both come in the first 20 minutes of this three-hour-long slog.

In one, a do-nothing estate owner sings an ode to an old bookcase, a speech that is a symbol of the estate's pomposity that is as hilarious as it is telling.

Moments later, he and his sister, who are facing the loss of an estate and the orchard of the play's title that have been in their family for centuries, ask a local businessman what they should do.

Never mind that the businessman, Boris Borisovich Simenon-Pischik (played perfectly by the English stage hound Simon Russell Beale), has spent the previous scenes begging, beseeching, praying, hoping, wishing, cajoling, demanding and urging the pair to sell a piece of their land to save the entire estate. When the brother and sister whine again, "What shall we do, please tell us what shall we do?" Beale gets a huge laugh merely by sighing, moving an eyebrow and saying in an accent bordering on the Cockney, "I want you to do what I have been telling you to do every day! Sell your land."

The laughs get even sweeter when the audience realizes that neither the brother nor the sister is even listening to the answer.

Much of the first half of the Sam Mendes-directed production captured every bit of the mirthful satire of Chekhov's 1904 play, over that the Russian writer always considered a comedy.

But the problems begin after the intermission, when the joyful send up of pre-Revolution Russia turns witless and cloying.

Even in his day, Chekhov fought the notion that his play's conclusion is sad. But few directors, Mendes included, I'm afraid, have the courage to stage it as the farce Chekhov believed it could be. The main problem, of course, is that theater folk want us to sympathize with Raneykaya, the faded matron of the estate — the one who is constantly asking, "What is to be done," but simply doesn't want to "do" anything of the things she could.

Give her a break, Mendes seems to be saying, she's had a hard life: she lost her youngest child to drown-



"The Cherry Orchard"
by Anton Chekhov
(adapted by Tom Stoppard)
Brooklyn Academy of Music's Harvey Theater (85 Fulton St., at Rockwell Place in Fort Greene, (718) 636-4100)
Performances through March 8:
Tuesdays through Saturdays at 7:30 pm; Sundays at 3 pm (except Sunday, March 1, when the curtain is at 7:30 pm and Sunday, March 8, when the curtain is at 2 pm).
Tickets: \$30-\$90. Available at www.bam.org.

sack to earn it from the audience, but it's an impossible task for any actress.

Her counterpart, Paul Jesson, has a much easier time in the role of Gaev, the ne'er-do-well brother — the one who gives lofty oratory to belated bookcases or sunsets, yet hasn't earned a dime in his entire life. As the embodiment of Russia's declining landed gentry of the 1880s, Gaev can only be played for laughs and ridicule, and Jesson performs sublimely.

In these rare moments when the audience is tempted to feel a tug on its heartstrings for him, Jesson and Mendes are right to relax the fingers, allowing Gaev to just be utterly ridiculous.

But Cusack isn't afforded this opportunity. She's thrown out there, lunging and fainting to the last, as the orchard is literally chopped down before her eyes.

By that point in the play, of course, the audience just wants the damn

trees eviscerated already. And that's the point of Chekhov's "comedy": it is not sad, the playwright reminds us, that the landed gentry of pre-Revolutionary Russia collapsed under its own inaction — it's inevitable. It's tragic, if you will, only by the dictionary definition of the word: something that is simply fated to happen.

Indeed, if there is any takeaway from "The Cherry Orchard," it is the actual history that the production recalls. Americans like to think of Soviet Communism as some sort of aberration. But "The Cherry Orchard" reminds us anew that there was plenty of pre-Lenin chatter about social equality and a workers' utopia from the "men of action," the intelligentsia, and even the "lithy che-lovks," the so-called "superfluous men" of the 1860s who are represented by the character of Gaev.

The proto-Communist character, the perpetual student Trofimov (Ethan Hawke), is earnest, though his earnestness is undercut by his own cowardice — he lacks the courage of his convictions even as those convictions seem to be on the rise.

Hawke, though gorgeous even in his gaunt middle age, stalks the stage like a ghost with a case of bedbugs, full of twitches and ticks. He made all the right choices, playing Trofimov as a walking contradiction, but he could've ramped down the physical bits.

He doesn't benefit from a staging that, as some points, has him and other characters giving some of the most important speeches with their backs turned to the entire left side of the house. The BAM Harvey Theater has odd acoustics that don't allow such edge-of-the-stage speeches to be heard properly, and Mendes should not have staged such passages that way.

Alas, due to some deserved criticism is Paul Pym's lighting during the entire performance. Partly by design, whole portions of the stage are shrouded in darkness. The goal is to create a brooding mood, but the result are shadows cast on some characters' faces as they move from one side of the house to the other. It's distracting.

Equally underwhelming is Anthony Ward's sparse set design. The Harvey Theater is an immense space, and Ward's mini-estate does not live up to it.

That said, heaps of praise are earned by costume designer Catherine Zuber for her historic, yet modern, outfits — including a subtle shift in Gaev's suit from old man on the estate to modern clerk after he lands his big job at the bank in the play's waning moments.

And the remaining cast — especially Josh Hamilton as the Purit-obsessed valet Yasha; Richard Easton as the symbol of Old Russia, the old servant Firs; and Rebecca Hall as the much put-upon adopted daughter Varya — is universally excellent.

But at three hours (including intermission), Mendes' "The Cherry Orchard" is a big slog.

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On January 14th, the true voice of the community was heard loud and clear:

Community Board 2 Overwhelmingly Votes to Approve Dock Street Dumbo!



Community Board 2's decisive vote last week made it clear that Dock Street Dumbo — with its desperately needed **middle school** and Dumbo's first ever **affordable housing** — has earned the strong support of this community.

After the Board's first meeting of 2009 opened with local elected officials praising the Board for the critical role it plays as the **true voice** of the neighborhood, the members **voted by a margin of 30 to 7 to approve Dock Street Dumbo**.

Councilmember Letitia James said that "this is an opportunity we can't afford to miss," and one member of the Board concluded, "When we look at what [the community board] has asked for in the past, the need for a middle school tops that list."

We are extremely grateful for Community Board 2's vote of confidence. We urge others who believe this is an important project to **call Councilman Yassky at 718-875-5200 and urge him to respect the true voice of the community and support Dock Street Dumbo**.

For more information, visit

www.dockstreetdumbo.com

Dock Street DUMBO is a project of Two Trees Management, 45 Main Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201 • Tel: 718-222-2500

ANDY...

Continued from page 5
like country because of my technical limitation. I only picked up a guitar three years ago.

I got into playing music because country and blues seemed easy to play, and I've got a lot on my mind. Life is hard enough. I use my guitar so that I can get things off my chest.

Country music — regardless of whether or not we call it my music country music — isn't about writing songs about God, chickens or farms. It's about dealing with yourself and your surroundings in an honest and straightforward way, with whatever you got to give.

GO: The most overtly local song is "Tredley's Backroom." It's interwoven. But isn't the story of our borough and our city that we simply paved over the old, even if history gets lost in the name of progress?

AFI: I don't think that song is a protest song, or an anti-Ratner song. Heck, I've shopped at Target. But I love those bars and I'm entitled to lament. That's all it is. I wrote that song sitting at the bar in a stack of beer coasters one night, just looking around, and thinking that soon it will be gone.

GO: I don't like the term "Hillbilly Leonard Cohen," which is what one was dubbed when I was called you as a hillbilly. Are you? If so, please accept my apologies.

AFI: I don't proclaim to be a "Hillbilly Leonard Cohen." But for folks who want to know what our music is like, and what we're all about, the marketing guru thought that tag would shed a little bit of light on where we're coming from. I'm certainly not a hillbilly, or a genius Canadian zen poet.

Let's settle with the NPR quote: "a hot live act." That works for me.

Andy Friedman and the Other Failures at Southpaw 1125 Fifth Ave. at St. Johns Place in Park Slope, (718) 230-0241 7:30 p.m. Tickets \$10. For info, visit www.spsounds.com or www.andyfriedman.net.

'Bears' market

Teen rockers are ready for prime time

By Gersh Kuntzman
The Brooklyn Paper

Finally, the Care Bears on Fire are not just for kids anymore.

The Park Slope-based trio — newly reconfigured as an all-girl band — is about to play its highest-profile gig ever: a Saturday night, all-ages, leave-the-muffin-animals-at-home show at the Bell House.

But first, a little unfinished business.

Patricia Lucio (no last names, please — they're all barely teenagers) left the band last year and was replaced by Jena, a Manhattanite who, at 14, is the oldest Bear ever. She'll play bass.

What happened to Lucio? "We had creative differences and he went in a different direction," said Izzy, 13, in an exclusive sit-down with GO Brooklyn.

Wait a second: did a 13-year-old use the term "creative differences"? Yes, she did.

"He wanted to do other things," added Sophie, who has taken over guitarist duties.

You know what? Take it from this CBOF fan, he never fit in anyway. I mean, how can the Izzy and Sophie be expected to sing "Five Minute Boyfriend" or their new instant classic, "Boy Song #1," with a real live boy around?

"Now that we're an all-girl group, we can feel free," said Izzy. "Like on 'Boy Song #1,' it's about how boys are just as insecure as girls."

With the loss of Lucio came a few major gains: the remaining Care Bears are better musicians than they were just one year ago, when they played to packed (though typically after-noon) houses at the BAM Cafe and other family-friendly venues.

And they've even better than when they played before 7,000 people in England.

"We changed and grew up so much," said Izzy.

Did a 13-year-old just get wise about growing old? "Well, when you're 13 and you're taking about stuff that happened two years ago, it's actually a long time ago," she added.

The new band is on Curve Records (yes, they got a record deal and you didn't), which will put out the trio's still-unreleased new album this summer with a ramped-up, smoothed-out, still-kick-ass version of "Everybody Else."

That tune was also on the band's

Clave Secrete accompanied by the Brooklyn Philharmonic. Price of admission includes t-shirt \$50. Brooklyn Masonic Temple 317

YOGA CLASS FOR SENIORS: FREE. 2:15 p.m. St. Charles Jubilee Center (55 Park Slope, between Henry and Hicks streets in Brooklyn Heights, (718) 855-0202).

FORECLOSURE PREVENTION: Seminar offered one-on-one. 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. at 1884 Flatbush Ave. at Church Street, between Henry and Hicks streets in Brooklyn Heights, (718) 282-2500.

SEX FOR MOMS: Learn how to have great sex during pregnancy. Refreshments served. 7 p.m. at 105 Morgan Ave. at Stagg Street, between Henry and Hicks streets in Brooklyn Heights, (718) 715-4961.

NEW LATINO MUSIC: Members of the Brooklyn Philharmonic. 8 p.m. at 105 Morgan Ave. at Stagg Street, between Henry and Hicks streets in Brooklyn Heights, (718) 715-4961.

WED, JAN 28
PERFORMANCE
THEATER, "THE CHERRY ORCHARD": See Saturday, Jan. 24.

THEATER, "THE PROTESTANTS": See Saturday, Jan. 24.

OTHER
DANCE: Full company production by Manomane Dance Company. FREE.

THU, JAN 29
PERFORMANCE
THEATER, "THE CHERRY ORCHARD": See Saturday, Jan. 24.

THEATER, "THE PROTESTANTS": See Saturday, Jan. 24.

OTHER
LATINO MUSIC, CLUB NOC: See Saturday, Jan. 24.

HALF OFF FRODO: Wolfram Rink hosts a sale on its admission charge. Price of admission.

FRI, JAN 30
PERFORMANCE
THEATER, "THE CHERRY ORCHARD": See Saturday, Jan. 24.

THEATER, "THE PROTESTANTS": See Saturday, Jan. 24.

OTHER
LATINO MUSIC, CLUB NOC: See Saturday, Jan. 24.

HALF OFF FRODO: Wolfram Rink hosts a sale on its admission charge. Price of admission.

SAT, JAN 31
PERFORMANCE
CLASSICAL CONCERT: Grace and Spiritus Choral of Mendelssohn. 7:30 p.m. at 105 Morgan Ave. at Stagg Street, between Henry and Hicks streets in Brooklyn Heights, (718) 715-4961.

THEATER, "THE CHERRY ORCHARD": See Saturday, Jan. 24.

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For our Brooklyn Nightlife options, see our listings at BrooklynPaper.com/Nightlife

2007 debut LP: "I Stole Your Animal," which included the creepy, but seminal, "Met You on Myspace." It was also in a Converse ad (go ahead, call them scrofuls).

Will success ruin the Care Bears on Fire? Izzy and Sophie are only 13, but believe it or not, they're thinking about it.

"We need to stay raw and authentic and not compromise who we are," said Izzy.

Not compromise? But isn't that what being an adult is all about? Or, never mind. They've got plenty of time to learn.

"We won't change, we won't go Disney," added Sophie. "We're girls who rock. We want to show girls that girls can be cool."

Wow, rebels at age 13. With muffins and lattes.

Care Bears on Fire at the Bell House 149 Seventh St., between Second and Third avenues in Gowanus, (718) 643-6510. Jan. 24, 7 p.m. Tickets are \$10.

AUCTION: Night of bidding, wine, jazz and democratic. 8:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. Prospect Park East in park between the Lake and the Connetquot River in Prospect Park, (718) 287-6431.

ART EXHIBIT: "Moving Target," abstract drip art by Peter Fox. FREE. Noon-7 p.m. Holgar Collection 362 Grand St., near Haverwood Street in Williamsburg, (718) 388-5022.

MAGIC NIGHT AT GOOD OFFENSE: Comedy, magic and fun. 8 p.m. Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture 153 Prospect Park West at First Street in Park Slope, (718) 768-0723.

MUSIC: "Here and Now" and "The Cherry Orchard." 7:30 p.m. at 105 Morgan Ave. at Stagg Street, between Henry and Hicks streets in Brooklyn Heights, (718) 715-4961.

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The Brooklyn Paper

KIDS • SCHOOL • STYLE • TEENS • CAMPS • MUSIC

SMARTMO...

Continued from page 8
That was nine exclamations.

Later, she asked Smartmo why she wrote about her without asking her permission. But she didn't stop there.

She wondered why Smartmo wrote about the time Diaper Diva changed Dicky's diaper at the Cocoa Bar without asking her.

Then she asked her why she wrote about Teen Why did she smoke when Teen Spirit

asked her not to write about it. It was like she was building a case against Smartmo and her penchant for using family members as fodder for her stories.

"That's why I said it was a good friend of mine whose son was a smoker," Smartmo confided guiltily.

"But you still wrote about it."

Yes, she still wrote about it. And she didn't really have a good story. What she's doing to it is Smartmo's story or does it belong to them?

These are interesting questions. Perhaps Melville wondered whether he had the right to write about Moby Dick or was it Moby Dick's tale to tell.

Wait, that was fiction. But what about "Mommy Dearest"? Did Christina Crawford have the right to tell all about her mother?

Well, of course she had the right to write about her childhood — especially if she was raised by an abusive celebrity mom.

Buddha knows, Smartmo is not an abusive celebrity mom. But she does believe that it's kosher to write about the parts of her life that

else? Why did she have to do the smoking piece? Was it really necessary?

These difficult thoughts percolated in Smartmo's mind. Maybe she was using her family and friends for the sake of her column. Maybe she was being preposterous thinking that her family wouldn't mind being characters in the sitcom of her mind.

Like many writers, Smartmo uses her world as inspiration. But if it's a story about OSFO or Teen Spirit, who's story is it? What she's doing to it is Smartmo's story or does it belong to them?

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Buddha knows, Smartmo is not an abusive celebrity mom. But she does believe that it's kosher to write about the parts of her life that

include Teen Spirit and OSFO just as long as she's thoughtful and fair.

Besides, you can't be a writer if you have to censor your imagination. It just doesn't work if you have to leave too much out.

On the other hand, Teen Spirit and OSFO have reached an age when privacy is very important. It's everything. And it's just not right for their mom to be such a blabberpuss.

So what is Smartmo's job to explain her world to the world. And if that world includes her children, her husband, her friends and neighbors, then that's the story she has to tell. It's all about the way she writes it, the words she uses, and balance of honesty, fairness and love that she brings to the mix.

Her story — and she's sticking to it.

Louise Crawford also writes the blog *Only the Blog Knows Brooklyn*.

(718) 923-9710.
TUESDAY, JAN. 27
11 a.m. Kids sing-along. Free. 81 Atlantic Ave., between Hicks and Henry streets, (718) 923-9710.

THURSDAY, JAN. 29
6 p.m. Nintendo Wii sports night. This could be fun. Free. Moxie Spot (81 Atlantic Ave., between Hicks and Henry streets in Brooklyn Heights, (718) 923-9710).

FRIDAY, JAN. 30
6:45 p.m. Movie night. "Mary Poppins." Free. Moxie Spot (81 Atlantic Ave., between Hicks and Henry streets in Brooklyn Heights, (718) 923-9710).

SAT, JAN 31
11 a.m. Kids sing-along. Free. 81 Atlantic Ave., between Hicks and Henry streets, (718) 923-9710.

SUNDAY, JAN. 25
12:30 and 2:30 p.m. Puppet show, "Sleeping Beauty." A classic marionette show. \$8 (kids, \$7). Puppeteers 138 4th Ave. at Fourth Street in Park Slope, (718) 965-3391.

SUNDAY, JAN. 25
4 p.m. Chocolate Chip Chamber Music. See Sat., Jan. 24.

6 p.m. Bingo night. Free. Moxie Spot (81 Atlantic Ave., between Hicks and Henry streets in Brooklyn Heights, (718) 923-9710).

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Louise Crawford also writes the blog *Only the Blog Knows Brooklyn*.

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THURSDAY, JAN. 29
6 p.m. Nintendo Wii sports night. This could be fun. Free. Moxie Spot (81 Atlantic Ave., between Hicks and Henry streets in Brooklyn Heights, (718) 923-9710).

FRIDAY, JAN. 30
6:45 p.m. Movie night. "Mary Poppins." Free. Moxie Spot (81 Atlantic Ave., between Hicks and Henry streets in Brooklyn Heights, (718) 923-9710).

SAT, JAN 31
11 a.m. Kids sing-along. Free. 81 Atlantic Ave., between Hicks and Henry streets, (718) 923-9710.

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Landmarking Williamsburg, one block at a time

By Ben Muessig
The Brooklyn Paper

The city is aiming to protect at least one Williamsburg block from the high-speed development that has been changing the neighborhood's shape. The Landmarks Preservation Commission is considering turning Fillmore Place — a one-block stretch of 20th-century rowhouses between Driggs Avenue and Roebuck Street — into Williamsburg's first Historic District, forever shielding the tiny street lined with matching three-story brick homes from demolition or major cosmetic alterations.

Neighborhood preservationists are thrilled about the prospect of saving the quaint rowhouses, which served as middle-income housing when they were constructed in 1852 — three years before the village of Williamsburg became a part of the city of Brooklyn.

"In Williamsburg, there have been so many tear-downs over the decades that you rarely have a continuous row that was all developed in one point," said Ward Dennis, a Community Board 1 member who is also on the Williamsburg Greenpoint Preservation Alliance. "It would be a compelling historic district for the neighborhood and the city itself."

While skyscraping development rocked the neighborhood in recent years, resulting in a condo boom of glassy towers, large-scale developments, and much-maligned "finger buildings," the minuscule block — described in "Tropic of Capricorn" by author Henry Miller, who grew up at the corner of Fillmore Place and Driggs Avenue, as "the most enchanting street I have ever seen in all my life" and "the ideal street" — has hardly changed at all. The Landmarks agency agreed, deeming the stretch "a cohesive,

relatively intact ensemble... lining a narrow, block-long street with a definite sense of place" that serves "as an important reminder of Williamsburg's transformation from a rural village to a bustling urban neighborhood."

Today, Fillmore Place remains unknown to most anyone but longtime locals — and they're eager to see the city step in.

"If you've watched the transformation around here over the last 10 or 15 years, you start to think that nothing's safe from developers," said Frank Halden, 61. "If they landmarked the street, it would be a reminder that this neighborhood did exist before luxury condos and expensive cafes."

A vote by the Landmarks Preservation Commission will come after a public hearing on the historical value of Fillmore Place, which could be held as early as this spring, according to agency spokeswoman Lisa De Bourbon.



The city is moving to create a historic district along one-block-long Fillmore Place in Williamsburg.

CONY PLAN REDUX...

Continued from page 1

create hotels, restaurants, arcades, movie theaters, and even tattoo parlors.

The two other districts — the so-called "Coney North" and "Coney West" — would include 4,500 new apartments and hundreds of parking spaces.

The push for a year-round tourist destination is the most difficult element of the plan. Bloomberg has been dueling with real-estate mogul Joe Sitt, who owns significant amounts of Coney Island property and says he wants to build his own, \$1.5-billion, 24-7 Vegas-style pleasure palace.

Bloomberg has said that as a strip-mall developer Sitt lacks the ability to develop a profitable amusement park. As a result, Sitt's initiative, which requires the same kind of rezoning that the city is undertaking, has been stalled.

The city seeks to acquire Sitt's 10-1/2 acres in Coney Island, which cost him more than \$100 million to assemble. The just-released Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the mayor's rezoning plan says the city could acquire the land by buying it or seize it via condemnation, though the city planners have repeatedly denied that they would seek to use the state's eminent domain power.

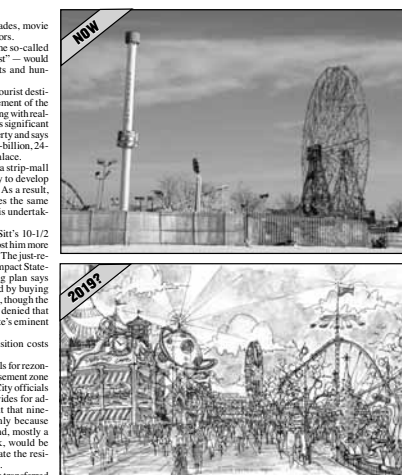
Either way, the land acquisition costs could be staggering.

In addition, the city plan calls for rezoning part of Coney Island's amusement zone as a nine-acre parkland zone. City officials say that parkland zoning provides for additional state oversight — but that nine-acre park is being created only because nine acres of existing parkland, mostly a parking lot for KeySpan Park, would be demapped as parkland to create the residential towers of Coney West.

The fact that parkland can be transferred so easily raises questions about whether the nine-acre parkland amusement zone would remain a theme park should a future mayor seek a different course for Coney Island.

In the end, the biggest question is money. A rezoning will make the oceanfront housing of "Coney West" very desirable to developers, but there may not be a market for the inland parcels of "Coney North," which are already zoned as residential.

Wouldn't that area be booming already if there was a market for such housing?



Present-day Coney Island is down to one amusement park, which houses Deno's Wonder Wheel (top). The mayor hopes to introduce new rides.

there? And if the rest of Coney is rezoned to allow indoor and outdoor amusements, hotels and retail, market pressures could drive out the good things about the People's Playground — places like Nathan's or the honky-tonk roadhouses like Cha Cha's. Ruby's on the Boardwalk.

"Unfortunately the city is determined to move forward with mediocrity," said Dick Zigant, the founder of the Coney Island Circus Sideshow and a former member of the Coney Island Development Corporation, the city agency overseeing the project.

He resigned in dissent last June after the city decreased the proposed theme park from 15 acres to nine acres.

Future of Coney Island Web site no longer porn

By Ben Muessig
The Brooklyn Paper

The future of Coney Island is no longer X-rated — but it's up for sale.

Online, that is. Last week, the Web site that Coney Island property owner Joe Sitt created to showcase "the future of Coney Island" was replaced with a pornographic Web site advertising the "best porn on the net."

But Davina Cukier — the Belgian woman who acquired www.thefutureofconeyisland.com when Sitt allowed it to lapse last fall — claims she's not responsible for the smut.

"My family has just warned me that my name is associated with a porn Web site," Cukier told The Brooklyn Paper in an e-mail interview. "It is completely wrong. I do not own any porn Web sites. The domain name I own, 'thefutureofconeyisland.com,' has been hijacked."

Cukier, a buyer and seller of Web domains, claims she purchased the site after noticing its popularity, but posted nothing on it due to illness. That's when hackers struck, converting the site that once touted Sitt's vision for a Vegas-style Nevada into a tawdry French language site directing visitors to www.SexPorn.com.

Once she learned about the smut,

Cukier removed the porno link from the page and posted a message explaining her side of the story in its place.

"I didn't even know how popular was 'thefutureofconeyisland.com' for sale... as I received several offers for the domain," said Cukier, who is currently auctioning off the domain in a contest ending on Jan. 25. "I don't want to keep it because of all the problems it caused to me."

Cukier said the bidding starts at \$130, which is not a lot to control the future of Coney Island — especially given that Sitt has paid more than \$100 million in hopes of getting control of the real future of Coney Island.

But if the proposed zoning changes take effect, property values would increase because more lucrative uses, such as a hotel, would be permitted on the site.

NATHAN'S...

Continued from page 1

istration's plan to grow and revitalize the amusement district," said Andrew Brent, a spokesman for Mayor Bloomberg.

Yet the Bloomberg Administration and Nathan's concede that the beachgoers' haunt would need to undergo a major transformation if it is to take its place in the city's sweeping vision for massive private investment in Coney Island.

Current zoning rules prevent Nathan's from building anything but an outdoor amusement, like a merry-go-round, on its lot.

But if the proposed zoning changes take effect, property values would increase because more lucrative uses, such as a hotel, would be permitted on the site.

CONDOS FALL...

Continued from page 1

to underwrite its annual maintenance budget — was blamed on the recession.

"Due to the present economic climate, we don't have a schedule for either of these development sites," said Warner Johnston, a spokesman for the Brooklyn Bridge Park Development Corporation, the state agency overseeing construction of the water-front park-and-condo package.

When fully built, the project is supposed to include at least 1,210 apartments, the hotel, restaurants and retail inside the park's footprint as part of a unique funding arrangement.

Instead of paying normal taxes, these parcels would contribute funds that are earmarked to cover the anticipated \$15.2 million of operating and maintenance costs of open space on six piers and uplands areas. So far, about 500 apartments exist — though many remain empty — in One Brooklyn Bridge Park, a former Watchtower Bible and Tract Society complex at the corner of Furman and Joralemon streets in Brooklyn Heights.

Without the additional housing and hotel, the park is confronted by questions of how it can pay its operating costs — costs that will kick in by the end of this year when some of the earliest portions of the open spaces are supposed to open.

The Brooklyn Bridge Park De-

velopment Corporation declined to address these pressing money problems resulting from the imperiled housing and hotel pieces.

• Without these sources of operating and maintenance revenue, how will the park cover its annual budget?

• How much has been spent on operating and maintenance so far?

• Are payments from the still-not-fully occupied One Brooklyn Bridge Park condo building covering those costs?

Supporters of the funding scheme say it protects the park from the whimsies of government budget cutters, though critics denigrate it for bringing large-scale private development onto park space — therefore making it not a "park" by the most-common definition.

The project's spokespeople say the housing and lodge are halted, not abandoned, but critics were ecstatic about these casualties of the economic downturn.

"It's obviously very welcome news," said Judi Francis, president of the Brooklyn Bridge Park Defense Fund, a park advocacy group, which has used to block development inside the project's footprint. "It's something we've been advocating for since day one — to avoid the anti-park precedent of putting housing inside a park."

This setback only complicates the financial picture of the project. In 2002, Mayor Bloomberg

and then-Gov. Pataki committed \$150 million to transform the former Port Authority piers into a world-class park by 2012.

Now, the costs have soared to more than \$300 million while several active recreational portions — playing fields on Pier Two, basketball and other hard-court activities on Pier Three and a kayaking area — have been shelved until authorities scrounge up additional government money.

The Brooklyn Bridge Park Development Corporation has cloaked a veil of secrecy over its finances. Officials from the group have made well-publicized presentations about its plans to complete recreational parts of the park by the end of the year, but clammed up when The Brooklyn Paper questioned how it would handle the rocky economic road.

"We continue to finalize these details and look forward to presenting them to the public later this month," Johnston wrote in an e-mail. He was referring to an upcoming public meeting on Jan. 29 at NYU-Polytechnic in Metrotech.

The Brooklyn Bridge Park Development Corporation says it will present financial details about the development on Jan. 29 at NYU-Polytechnic's Diner Auditorium (5 Metrotech Center, near the corner of Jay and Johnson streets in Downtown), 6 p.m. Call (718) 803-3100 for info.

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OUR OPINION

Make the 'park' a park

Brooklyn Bridge Park — which was conceived decades ago as a public park along Brooklyn's world-class waterfront — has seen nothing but bad news so far this year.

And we're still in January. First, officials with the state development agency that oversees the condo and open space project announced that they had abandoned a plan to build a hotel on Furman Street near Old Fulton Street, a lodge that would have expansive vistas of the Brooklyn Bridge and the Lower Manhattan skyline. Then, last week, the Brooklyn Bridge Park Development Corporation admitted that it was also no longer pursuing the construction of roughly 800 units of luxury housing inside the park.

Here's the problem: the hotel and condo units — along with an underutilized amount of additional commercial and residential development — were touted by state officials as the only way to raise revenue to cover the annual maintenance budget for the development's public open space.

"The Brooklyn Bridge Park development must be abandoned and replaced with a simple public park."

We've long questioned the notion of establishing such a dedicated revenue stream, but the project's advocates have argued that such a funding scheme is necessary or else there would be no park at all. Now this debate is framed anew, given the latest flops and last year's endless parade of bad news: delays in the construction timeline, cost overruns that have more than doubled the original \$150-million construction budget, and then the stunning announcement that, for now at least, the much-touted "world-class park" will consist only of small passive recreation areas on Pier 1 at the foot of Old Fulton Street and Pier 6 at the foot of Atlantic Avenue — a tiny portion of the park's footprint.

Taken together, it is reasonable to con-

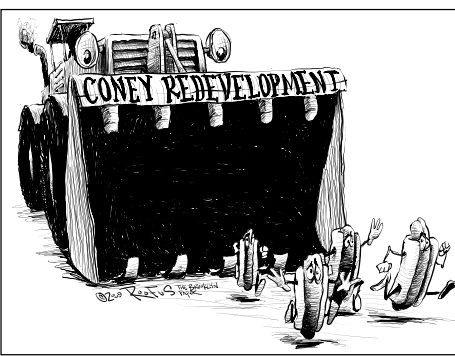
clude that the Brooklyn Bridge Park development project must be abandoned and replaced with what many area residents have been calling for for decades: a simple public park, along the entire 1.3-mile stretch.

Not a waterfront development with an open space component. Not a scheme to build a backyard for residents of 1,300 units — or more! — of luxury housing and the hotel guests. No, a real, albeit modest, public park that would be maintained from the same pool of money that maintains every other public park.

Building a much-less grandiose public park along the waterfront — not the fantasyland that the development agency envisions — would require far less cash than the hundreds of millions of dollars (and still going!) that the state planners say they need.

And we'd all get what we've sought for decades: access to our beautiful waterfront — a goal that keeps eluding our illustrious state planners.

ALL DRAWN OUT



LETTERS

A real broadside about Portside New York

To the editor,

I am a longtime fan of your paper and an avid reader, especially of your dedicated coverage of development and land-use issues. I was surprised by your article on the recent community board meeting concerning proposals for Atlantic Basin in Red Hook ("City scolded on in-port plan," online, Jan. 6) in that it set up a false choice between the beer distribution company and Tom Fox's water taxis.

Too, the story omitted the third proposal that seems to be the most realistic.

Unanimous support for the community: Portside New York.

Portside is small, home-grown

cultural institution that brings together diverse constituents in Red Hook and the larger New York Harbor community. As an advocate for smart, forward-looking waterfront planning, it seeks to promote awareness of both our strong maritime heritage and contemporary waterfront issues through exhibits, events and programs.

Portside is seeking a permanent home and the basin is a natural place to bridge upland communities and accessible water-borne activities for the general public.

Portside (and especially the historic coastal tenter Mary A. Whalen) delivers an invaluable sense of place that is quickly disappearing in New York City's waterfront communities.

A wide range of people at the meeting you covered expressed great enthusiasm for Portside New York's proposal.

This support was expressed by at least one of the two other applicants, the Economic Development Corporation, several Community Board 6 members and a chorus of local residents and business owners.

My sense was that Portside's proposal — which has a much smaller footprint than that of the other two — could be smartly

integrated into any of the other uses that were proposed.

Perhaps this is why you overlooked it, but it certainly was worthy of a mention.

Tim Ventimiglia, Boerum Hill

He's grilled

To the editor,

Gersh Kuntzman has become an old foe!

I must tell you I have always had outstanding service at Peter Lager ("Stealing a claim" Lager's must hand column to Mr. Kuntzman, Jan. 10). Yes, sometimes you give a few minutes, but wait until Morgen's begins to get crowded and you will wait, too!

And what do you mean that Peter Lager offers no appetizers and no salads? You obviously have never ordered the onions and tomatoes. Lager's tomatoes are better than the steaks (most of the time).

I can cook a steak as well as most other places — except Peter Lager. I go there a few times a year and can honestly say I never had a bad meal there. I can't say the same thing about Morgen's in Chicago or Ruth Chris's in the Capital Grille, to name a few.

Sidney Meyer, Boerum Hill

DUMB-OH!

To the editor,

The DUMBO Neighborhood Association supports appropriate development — but that means not compromising the majesty of the Brooklyn Bridge ("Walenta's 'Dock' project sails," Jan. 17).

The increase in density due to spot zoning changes for David and Jed Walentes's Dock Street project will increase congestion and pollution; it will also seriously compromise one of the most historic waterfront areas in the country, if not the world.

DUMBO, Fulton Ferry Landing and the Brooklyn Bridge itself are national, state and city-designated landmarks and historic districts. The very nature of these areas is under significant and what could be catastrophic development pressures should Dock Street be approved.

The proposed school, affordable housing and "green" building are all laudable features, but they have become the distraction over significant and permanent zoning changes to a fragile area.

The DNA is not opposed to a building being constructed at Dock Street, and absolutely supports a

school or affordable housing at the site. What we are opposed to is the very tall building that will cast significant shadows on the surrounding blocks; eliminate the view of the Manhattan Bridge from the Brooklyn Bridge walkway; and forever change the Brooklyn waterfront and skyline.

Sheryl Bucholtz, DUMBO

The writer is president of the DUMBO Neighborhood Association.

She says 'nay'

To the editor,

I am annoyed by your recent story regarding my neighborhood ("Stablebrook," Dec. 27). When we organized "Stable Brooklyn" in response to out-of-scale development in 2005, we were setting up a Web site and we needed a domain name. The pun seemed to fit because it reflected our goals of trying to stabilize the flux that was occurring around us and the name also incorporated the staples, one of the defining features of the area. End of story.

Your reporter must have felt this was not a good enough story, so he invented his own, imagining that our group was on a re-

naming quest and that there were people in favor and against it, etc. That's a complete fabrication!

Our group's energy (and imagination) has been spent on pursuing things that matter: zoning to protect our homes and ensure diversity in our neighborhood as well as traffic, pedestrian, bicycle, and equestrian safety improvements for residents and visitors to the area.

Our community group's name is a reflection of nothing more, Mandy Harris, Windsor Terrace

Editor's note: The Department of City Planning and Councilman Bill DeBlasio are using the name "Stable Brooklyn" to describe the area in which Harris refers, evidence that our story was not a "fabrication."

'Silliness'

To the editor,

I am writing to express concern about a police blatter item in the Dec. 13 issue ("Semitic silliness").

I was disturbed by the caption, "Semitic silliness," which described two recent bias incidents in the 84th precinct where two Brooklyn Heights residents received anti-Semitic notes, one

of which said, "Kill Jews."

Bias incidents are not "silly."

Describing bias incidents in this manner belittles a serious problem. Please train your caption writer to be more sensitive in the future.

S. Small, Brooklyn Heights

'Watch' this!

To the editor,

I am writing in reference to the article, "90 to watch in '09" (Dec. 27). Specifically, I'd like to draw your attention to number 72 on your list: the Bay Ridge Food Co-op.

As a member of the committee helping to make this food co-op a reality, I was thrilled to see it included in the article. But I was a bit dismayed to see a reference to last June about the initiator of the first meeting, Murray Gross.

Mr. Gross is no longer a member of the committee, for a number of reasons, and has become a bit of a polarizing figure as we move forward in planning this venture.

I am an avid reader, and hope that your readers could have the opportunity to follow one of the truly exciting new events of 2009, the Bay Ridge Food Co-op!

Michael Emperor, Bay Ridge

Send a letter

By e-mail: Letters@BrooklynPaper.com

By mail: Letters, The Brooklyn Paper, 55 Washington St., Brooklyn, NY 11201.

All letters must be signed and include the writer's home address and phone number (only the writer's name and neighborhood are published with the letter). Letters may be edited and will not be returned. The earlier in the week you send your letter, the better.

Two-man race for Council

By Mike McLaughlin
The Brooklyn Paper

Just-released campaign finance filings by the six candidates seeking to represent a broad swath of Brownstone Brooklyn in the City Council show a shift in momentum.

Josh Skaller, a denizen of a reformist Democratic clubhouse, raked in the most money from by far the largest donor pool in the six-month fundraising period ending Jan. 15 compared to his fellow combatants for the Park Slope, Carroll Gardens and Cobble Hill seat being vacated by Bill DeBlasio.

Skaller's records show he raised almost \$22,000 from 213 contributors — not exactly Barack Obama numbers, but good enough to boost him to



Josh Skaller



Brad Lander

second behind money leader Brad Lander, a Community Board 6 member.

Lander has raised \$105,548 to Skaller's \$75,788.

"If you go back and look at other races, the money makes a big difference," Skaller said to The Brooklyn Paper.

City spending rules permit city office-seekers to spend

\$161,000 in the primary race and another \$161,000 during the general election. In this heavily Democratic district, the fiercest fight is to win the Dems' September primary.

The winner typically coasts through the general election in November.

DeBlasio could have run for his seat again, thanks to

Mayor Bloomberg's successful bid to extend term limits. But DeBlasio, one of the most outspoken and all-out critics of the term-limit change, opted for the Public Advocate contest.

The other candidates striving to represent the wild 39th district are:

• Bob Zuckerman, executive director of the Gowanus Canal Conservancy, who has raised \$43,098.

• John Heyer, community liaison for Borough President Markowitz, has raised \$18,000.

• Gary Reilly, lawyer and subway advocate, has raised \$14,865.

• Craig Hammerman, district manager of Community Board 6, has not yet filed campaign finance documents.

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Miss New York to rock over the competition!

Here she is, Miss America!

That's right, folks, Miss New York — the former Miss Brooklyn, Leigh-Taylor Smith — is going to win the coveted tiara on Saturday night in Las Vegas.

If not, a crime against humanity — OK, a crime against New York, at least — has occurred.

Yes, we've been here before — 24 times before, to be exact, since Vanessa Williams became the last Miss New York to win it all.

Our best shot came in 2007 when the pride of Bay Ridge, Bethlene Panosist, became runaway roadkill because — and on this point, there can be no argument — the rest of the country hates New York.

It wasn't Miss Oklahoma's fault that she won that year. I suppose, Lauren Nelson was the latest in a long line of airy blondes with middle-aged lady haircuts, a talent for button-twirling and vaguely Southern accents who have hijacked the notion of American beauty.

With the raven-haired, tap-dancing, no-nonsense, Panosist, it was supposed to be different. New York



The lovely Miss New York, and her competition.



The lovely Miss New York, and her competition.

THE BROOKLYN ANGLE

By Gersh Kuntzman

Think I'm kidding myself? Just look at her main competition!

Miss Alaska, Stephanie Jeffers (top): I could forgive her platform — "Improve to improve" — and I could forgive that she shares a profession with former beauty queen Sarah Palin. And I wouldn't mind that she wants to get ahead in life except that clearly she wants to get a forehead in life.

Miss Arizona, Erin Nuss (center): Her "program" for reducing childhood obesity is called "Be Fit, fueled and fabulous."

That's nice, but she looks like a contestant on "Real Housewives of Tempe," not Miss America.

Miss Kansas, Emily Deaver (bottom): Are they joking? She looks like a backup singer in a Dolly Parton cover band playing in Branson, Arkansas.

Make sure to vote for Miss New York, Leigh-Taylor Smith, at 8 p.m. on TLC.

was saying "no" to the beauty queen-industrial complex that drives this, our nation's most illustrious pageant.

Unfortunately, the pageant said "no" right back.

But this year, we're fight-

ing back with Smith. She's got talent! She's got brains! She's got a bikini like a bikini like she does (I'm speaking figuratively, alas!)

